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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are in a period of transition, self-examination, and change. Management is considering new methods, such as management by objectives. Unionization is growing. Since funding tends to be diminishing while library growth continues, cooperative acqusitions promise improved accessibility. Ways to better serve users need to be found, and automation, outreach, and library interpretive services are steps in that direction. Emphasis is needed on government documents, microforms, archives, non-book materials, and services to those with special problems. Personnel problems revolve around job security and faculty status. (LS)

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ACADEMIC LIBRARIES - STATE OF THE ART

Irene B. Hoadley

Since time is short and I have a lot to say, I will move forward quickly. I have five areas I want to cover - Management, Resources, services, personnel, and miscellaneous (what doesn't fit anywhere else) - and since this is a review of the current status of academic libraries I intend to only touch on issues and then I will respond to any specific questions later.

Academic libraries are presently in a transition period. It is a period between the dominance of the book and the emergence of microforms and electronic retrieval. It is a period of transition from autocratically to democratically run libraries. For many libraries it is a period of self examination and outreach. It is a period of changing career patterns and different types of persons entering the profession. Some of the changes taking place now will effect academic libraries for many years to come. For this reason, I feel that libraries must know where they are going if they want to end up in the right place. We need dreams of tomorrow so that we do not get caught up in the intricacies of today. It seems an era has ended, but there is the hope of new horizons.

In terms of management, academic libraries are at all stages of development. There are still the autocrats - both heavy handed and velvet gloved. There are those libraries that are not governed in any perceptible style. And then there are those which ocast along under what I might term the "please everyone" or "don't rock the boat" syndrome.

What are some of the choices that libraries should be considering? There is management by objectives which offers some new challenges to libraries. At least libraries have to think about what it is they are doing. Intelligent decision making is only possible when goals are clearly defined. There are programs such as MRAP (Management Review and Analysis Program) which would be beneficial is many libraries especially those which have not experienced

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a transitional stage in recent years. A program such as this makes a library look at what it is doing and assess the alternatives for the future. Libraries very much need to establish priorities.

In terms of other concerns there is collective bargaining and unions. I am unaware of any unionized libraries in Texas, but there are a good many outside of the state. This is a situation which librarians are going to have to cope with since unionization has a definite effect on the functioning of a library.

Another area of concern is finances. Finances should not determine how a library is managed. However, situations created by "financial exigency" have an effect on the management of libraries. Just as inflation and decreased federal funding does. The choices made to react to these concerns say a lot about how the library is run.

Future prospects for funding in Texas seem optomistic. Most any place else in the country quite the opposite is true. The situation is New York is probably the worst and the best known. Most other states are also experiencing difficulties. And this applies to both public and private institutions although overall the private institutions are probably experiencing more serious problems. An upturn in the economy will help, but it appears to me that support for higher education has crested. Hopefully it will maintain its present level and not begin a downward trend.

Moving on the resources - what is there to say. There is more and more to buy with less money which has less value. This is further complicated in that academic libraries are beginning to acquire non-book materials and adding them to their collections. Libraries are still in the phase of bigger being better. The importance of libraries is reflected by their size since this is the basis for national rankings, and the criteria for admission to such groups as the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Again size is the ultimate criteria even when an evaluative methodology such as the Clapp Jordan formula is used.

Hopefully libraries and librarians will someday find a means of establishing rankings which will reflect quality rather than quantity. Numbers are not as important as the individual items held. More attention needs to be given to finding ways to limit library growth without compromising quality. Librarians can no longer trot blindly down traditional expansionist paths without pausing to question the logic of their course.

If this importance of numbers can be overcome, then it will become much easier to consider cooperative acquisitions. The profession has talked of this concept for years but it has usually not gone much beyond talk. There are exceptions such as the Research Libraries Group (RLG) which consists of the NYPL, Columbia, Yale and Harvard which have established areas of collection development. How successful the venture will be, only more experience will tell. It is at least a step in the right direction.

If cooperative acquisition programs could be implemented, the next step would be to provide for more general accessibility to the collections. As it is, many libraries make it a hassle for persons who are not members of that specific academic community to use the collection. Books sitting on the shelf are not doing anyone any good. It is only by getting them in the hands of those that need them that they serve a purpose. Not only do many libraries not encourage use of the collection beyond their campus border, but they do little to encourage use on their own campus. Perhaps too often we get too involved in the day to day operations of the library to devote time to the real goals of a library - uniting books and people.

Perhaps more time should be spent in determining ways for patrons to make better use of the collections - easier means of access both physically and bibliographically. Physical access has to do with better planned library buildings and better internal arrangements and bibliographic access has to do with the organization of knowledge and the control of that organization.

One of the most important happenings in libraries is automation and the resultant information retrieval opportunities. OCLC has become a national system for cataloging and is now beginning to move into other areas of technical services. Although OCLC began as an academic consortium, it now encompasses all types of libraries.

CONSER is also with us. It is a comprehensive machine - readable bibliographic data base of serial publications. It is one step toward a solution of providing control of serials.

Perhaps even more important to a library than its collections are the services provided to interpret and provide access to the collections. Up until quite recently service in academic libraries has been passive. We have sat behind our desks and waited for people to come to us. That is beginning to change with the rise of bibliographic instruction in academic libraries. The concept of outreach is no longer completely foreign to the academic library. Now that one step has been made doubtless there will be others which will provide a mechanism for bringing the library and its services to those who will not come to it.

More emphasis is needed on what in many libraries have been considered stepchildren - areas such as government documents, microforms, archives, and non-book materials. Most academic libraries provide these types of materials but they are often relegated to basements or attics or some back corner. Today's student is a product of a generation nurtured on television and tapes and cassettes. By taking a form that the student is familiar with, it might be a lot simpler to ease him into other formats such as the good old fashioned book. For instance, I wonder how many academic libraries have CATV or CAI facilities or utilize those mediums in terms of orienting a user to the collections or services of the library.

One other area that academic libraries have not exactly been leaders in is service to special groups of patrons such as handicapped users. Laws now insure access to the building and to most areas of the building. This did not come about because of the librarians concern but concern by the users themselves. Services for blind students exist in some libraries but only a few. Are libraries planned to facilitate use for persons with physical handicaps? I would say only in the most general way.

In order to make services function, people are required. The current status of personnel in academic libraries is a little precarious in certain areas of the country as indicated earlier. The uncertainty of job security could have an adverse long term effect on the profession. This combined with the uncertainty of finding employment by those just entering the profession is apt to make the profession a much more competative one. Those trying to find jobs are using all sorts of means to get employment resulting in an unfortunate situation.

For those already employed, there are new pressures. For anyone who fails to measure up in terms of work performance, there are several others ready to step in and take over. Working in a library is no longer - if it even was - a quiet haven in which to retreat.

Besides job related issues there is also the perennial issue of faculty status for librarians. In recent years some librarians have sought faculty status, some have given it up and some have decided they wanted no part of it. In my opinion it is the only way for librarians to go on the academic campus. However, this means that the librarian has the same responsibilities as any other faculty member including research, publication, teaching and service. Individuals who participate in this type of activity will in the long run be better librarians because they are able to bring the learning experience of these activities back to their jobs usually helping them to do a better job.

The future in this particular area is somewhat uncertain. The role of libraries is changing - libraries are doing different things in different ways. We need librarians who are trained to cope with new directions - automation, outreach services, and many more.

There were several other miscellaneous topics I wanted to cover but my time is just about gone so I will only mention what they are. These are basically items that need the attention of academic librarians. They include:

1. Networks and the interrelationships of types of libraries.
2. Intellectual freedom and such specific items as the confidentiality of records.
3. Copyright and the impact on libraries services if the new bill is passed.
4. Legislative role of academic libraries - one is needed.
5. Emerging role of women in the management of libraries.

There are many other topics but these are the major ones.

Libraries are at an important juncture and hopefully they will rise to the challenge of the future.

Thank you.